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ABSTRACT

In an effort to explain the Staff Accountability Plan for New Mexico's schools, two pamphlets were developed. Designed to address the issue of teacher accountability and certification, pamphlet 1 presents the three provisions of the New Mexico Staff Accountability Plan. The plan requires: (1) a written basic skills assessment as part of teacher training programs; (2) a written assessment of general professional knowledge for initial certification; and (3) an integrated program of on-the-job performance evaluation criteria of effective teaching and staff development activities. To ensure adequate opportunities for review of each of the recommendations, a six-step process is outlined, followed by a brief word about the implementation of the plan. In the second pamphlet, over twenty common concerns regarding the basic skills examination, certification, and evaluation criteria are presented in question and answer format. (LH)

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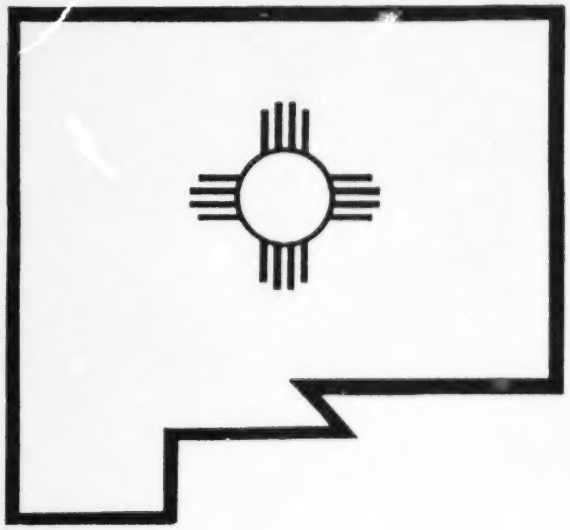
STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN FOR NEW MEXICO'S SCHOOLS

Provisions and Directives



December, 1981

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Background

In 1980 the New Mexico Legislature provided funds for an Accountability Study to be conducted by the New Mexico State Department of Education. During 18 months of research, consultations, conferences, analysis of issues, and public meetings, the Department staff examined various approaches to accountability, always keeping in mind the need to develop a program appropriate to New Mexico's needs. The initial draft of recommendations for State Board of Education consideration was revised after public discussions were held around the state. The following three recommendations, calling for a basic skills assessment for admission to teacher training programs, a written assessment of general and professional knowledge for initial certification, and an integrated program of performance evaluation and staff development, were adopted by the State Board of Education on November 9, 1981:

I. In order for teacher training programs in New Mexico to be Approved by the State Board of Education after July 1, 1983, there must be a written basic skills examination in reading, writing, and math for students prior to admission to the training program. The examination and performance standard will be selected by each institution. In order to ensure consistency, the examination and standard will be reviewed by the Educational Standards Commission and approved by the State Board of Education.

II. The State Board of Education requires an examination of general education, communication skills, methods and practices, and content specialization knowledge of all applicants as one of the requirements for initial teaching and administrative certification. The Board directs the State Department of Education to select or develop, with field consultation, an examination specific to New Mexico's needs; the Department will field test and validate the examination, and the Board will approve an appropriate standard of performance prior to implementation. All applicants for initial certification on or after July 1, 1983, must comply with this requirement.

III. The State Board of Education directs the Department of Education to:

A. Identify, by July 1, 1983, criteria defining effective classroom teaching performance and to develop uniform personnel evaluation structures utilizing the identified criteria of effective classroom teaching.

B. Recommend, by July 1, 1984, the creation of an initial three-year certificate during which time effective classroom teaching performance must be demonstrated.

C. Recommend, by July 1, 1984, the establishment of a five-year standard certificate based, in part, upon demonstrated effective classroom teaching performance during the period of initial certification.

D. Recommend, by July 1, 1984, the establishment of procedures for ten-year professional licensure and renewals based, in part, upon demonstrated effective classroom teaching performance.

E. Develop, by July 1, 1984, a plan for providing structured support during the period of initial certification for the purpose of strengthening skills and removing deficiencies prior to application for the standard certification.

F. Develop procedures, by July 1, 1984, for the provision of assistance to teachers and administrators in order to develop necessary skills for implementation of a personnel evaluation system based on the identified criteria for effective teaching performance.

In order to ensure adequate opportunities for review of each of the above recommendations, the following process shall be followed:

1. Department staff will develop initial recommendations.

2. Field reaction to those recommendations will be sought.

3. Recommendations will be modified as appropriate.

4. Modified recommendations will be returned to field personnel for further reaction.

5. The Educational Standards Commission will be consulted and involved as appropriate.

6. Final modifications will be presented to the State Board of Education for action.

Implementation

With the adoption of these three provisions by the State Board of Education, the basic direction for staff accountability has been established. Written competency examinations are not required nor contemplated for currently certified personnel. Potential changes in the requirements for recertification will be carefully reviewed and considered prior to action by the State Board of Education, as directed in Recommendation III. Since the goal is to develop a comprehensive, integrated approach to staff accountability in New Mexico, implementation will include a field review process.

The State Superintendent, questioning the value of teachers taking additional indiscriminate coursework for recertification, believes that those who demonstrate superior teaching characteristics should perhaps not be required to obtain such additional college credit hours. Mr. De Layo is interested in field reactions to this possible approach to recertification.

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STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN FOR NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

January, 1982

Instructional Services Division

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The Staff Accountability Plan came into existence as a result of expressed concern by the general public, legislators, and various segments of the educational community regarding the quality of performance of certified personnel and the instructional process. Surveys of New Mexico citizens made during the past few years, including the "People's Forum on Education" of 1976 and the "Quality Education Survey" of 1981, have indicated the public's concern over the adequacy of preparation of certified staff. Legislative attention was directed to issues involving teacher competency and accountability during 1980 and 1981, which included an appropriation of monies to conduct a study of the topic. Members of the education profession, including organizations representing classroom teachers, have also expressed growing concern over the professional image of education in the state. The intent of the Staff Accountability Plan is to develop a comprehensive, integrated approach to the shared responsibility each professional educator and educational organization must assume to assure quality instruction in New Mexico.

Provision I - In order to be approved by the State Board of Education, teacher training programs must require applicants for admission to pass a written assessment of basic skills.

Q. Who must comply with this provision?

A. In order to be approved, teacher education programs must require all applicants seeking admission after July 1, 1983, to be assessed.

Q. What will this examination include?

A. The examination will include reading, writing, and math. Each institution requesting an approved teacher training program will select a written test and the performance level to be required, subject to the approval of the State Board of Education.

Q. Where will applicants take this examination?

A. At the teacher preparation institution where they are applying for admission to an approved program.

Q. Will there be a fee for the examination?

A. Any fee or other charges will be determined by each institution.

Q. When will this examination be given?

A. Each teacher preparation institution will establish a schedule for the examination.

Q. What happens if the applicant does not meet the performance standard set by the institution?

A. Applicants are expected to correct their deficiencies in basic skills and repeat the examination process.

Provision II - An examination to qualify for initial certification in New Mexico.

Q. Who must comply with this provision?

A. All applicants for their first New Mexico certificate, including out-of-state applicants who may have taught previously in other states.

Q. Will persons currently certified in New Mexico be required to take the examination?

A. Written competency examinations are not required nor contemplated for currently certified personnel.

Q. Are there any certificates which will be excluded from this requirement?

A. Yes. Areas of certification which presently require demonstrated performance and/or a written examination for licensure as well as teacher aides, substitutes, and school social workers will not be required to take the examination.

Q. What will this examination include?

A. The examination will include the following areas: General Education (Mathematics, Literature, Science, Social Studies, and the Fine Arts), Communication Skills (Language and Expression), Methods and Practices (Foundations of Education and Teaching Principles and Practices), and Content Specialization (Elementary Education, Reading, Social Studies, Mathematics, etc.).

Q. Where will applicants take this examination?

A. It is likely that these tests will be given at colleges and institutions around the state which have testing centers.

Q. Will there be a fee for the examination?

A. Yes, applicants will pay a standard fee.

Q. When will this examination be given?

A. Beginning with Spring, 1983, applicants will be able to take the examination on one of several dates during the year.

Q. What happens if an applicant fails the examination?

A. Applicants may repeat the examination, however, they will not be certified until they have passed the examination.

Provision III - The formulation of recommendations addressing performance evaluation of certified personnel to be based, in part, on identified criteria of effective classroom teaching; possible modification of certification patterns; and development of a support system and technical assistance needed for the implementation of performance-based evaluations.

Q. By adopting this provision has the State Board of Education established a process for certifying personnel on the basis of competency rather than course work?

A. No, the State Board of Education has adopted a position that competency should be the major basis of certification and has directed the State Department of Education to develop alternatives for the Board's future consideration.

Q. Who will participate in the development of these recommendations?

A. Groups with an interest in education in New Mexico will be represented (e.g., members of the education profession, general public, school boards, etc.).

Q. What are some examples of effective teaching criteria?

A. Examples might include:

- The teacher uses a variety of appropriate materials and instructional techniques to promote and maintain student involvement in the lesson.
- Instruction is at a level which challenges each student.

Q. Who will select these criteria?

A. Representatives of the public and the education profession, including significant participation by teachers.

Q. What changes in certification will be considered?

A. Two changes will be examined: 1) establishment of a three-year initial certificate, to replace the present first four-year certificate, and 2) establishment of a five-year standard certificate, to replace the present second four-year certificate.

Q. What is the purpose of the three-year certificate, if adopted?

A. During the period of initial three-year certification, beginning teachers will be expected to demonstrate characteristics of effective teaching, strengthen skills, and remedy deficiencies (based on performance evaluations) prior to their eligibility for a five-year standard certificate.

Q. What would a support system provide?

A. The support system concept, with emphasis on the improvement of teaching performance, is one of the most important aspects of improved staff accountability. It would provide guidance, assistance, and the opportunity for continued skill development during the initial three years of experience. Training would be provided to administrators, especially principals, to enable them to conduct effective performance evaluations directed at staff development.

Q. Will teachers be required to continue taking course work for recertification?

A. This is an area receiving considerable attention by the State Superintendent. The State Department of Education staff and the Educational Standards Commission will be seeking field input and studying possible alternatives to additional course work for those teachers who demonstrate characteristics of superior teaching performance.

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